

Sermon, then Service

October 3, 2021

Romans 8:1-4

His dad was a somebody; so when he got in trouble, even though it was ugly trouble, because his dad was a somebody, they let him off; time and again they let him off - something of a free pass. Different time, different place. He was a somebody, in good with other somebodies; so when he got in trouble, they let him off - something of a free pass. He figured, they figured, they had something of a free pass to do what they wanted.

“There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” Sounds good, doesn't it? Do you ever use that as a free pass - “I know it's wrong, but it's ok, because **“there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”**”? How about your connections - your connection to your Father in heaven, your connection to his church here on earth - do you ever use your connections as a free pass - “I know it's wrong, but it doesn't matter - Dad promises to forgive me. I know it's wrong, but I'll go to church; I'll have the Lord's Supper; I'll pray. And everything will be ok.” Do you ever use your connections, do you ever use his promise of forgiveness to ok your sin? “It doesn't matter if I let my hormones run; it doesn't matter if I let my eyes wander online; it doesn't matter if I drink too much; it doesn't matter if I hide the truth, twist the truth, stretch the truth; it doesn't matter if I gossip and grouch and lose my patience; it doesn't matter if I go off on somebody Maybe it's not alright, but it doesn't matter because my Dad in heaven says he'll forgive me. I'll read my Bible; I'll go to church and the Lord's Supper; I'll pray a prayer and it will all be good.” Do you ever use your connections or his promise of forgiveness as a pass to ok your sin?

What if we replaced that word “sin” with _____?

- *now and then worship*
- *stingy offerings (I'll give when I have some more ...)*
- *staying on the sidelines with the work of the church*
- *contentment with “character flaws” - “I am who I am.”*
- *???*

When Paul wrote **“There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus”** do you think he meant to give you, me, us a free pass - “Go, do whatever you want;

you'll be forgiven"? Silly question, isn't it? If I'm thinking: "I've got connections - church connections, God connections - I can do whatever and God will forgive me" If I'm thinking: "I've got this promise - **"there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,"** so it's alright to do whatever because I've got his promise to forgive" If that's what I'm thinking, what do you think Paul would say? "Really!? You really think that's true?!" But people think that way. Maybe that's why John wrote: **"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ... If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."** If we claim to have connection with God and yet play with sin, stay in sin, we're kidding ourselves, lying to ourselves. Instead of living connected to him [Jesus], we're living connected to sin and Satan, playing and staying with sin and Satan and setting ourselves up to be damned with the world.

When Paul wrote **"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,"** Paul wasn't giving you, me, or anybody a free pass to go and sin. Paul didn't say: "There is now no condemnation for those playing in their sin, staying in their sin, excusing their sin." No, Paul said: **"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."**

So if Paul isn't giving us a Free Pass to sin, what is Paul doing? Paul is speaking to the broken-hearted, confessing sinner; who hates his sin; who is struggling, fighting not to sin, but in weakness, heart-breaking weakness gives in. Paul is answering the broken heart that sees its sin and cries out: **"What a wretch I am! Who will save me from this body of death?!"** To that struggling, fighting, heart-broken sinner, Paul gives God's answer: **"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus!"**

Why? Not because we struggled or tried. Not because we cried. Not because we kept our sin over there off to the side. Not because we came back here to Jesus' side. No! Our doing, the best of our doing, our struggling, our trying, our crying, our keeping our sin to the side, our coming back to Jesus' side, none of that can begin to make up for the wrong that we have done. So why is **"there now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus"**? Because God worked around us, outside of our ways to set us right. How? He sent his Son Jesus, in the appearance of sinful flesh; he sent his Son as one of us except without our sin. Then Paul says a strange thing: God sent Jesus for sin. And what did Jesus do "for sin"? He took it as his own. And when sin was feeling all good inside making Jesus feel miserable, God worked his judgment against sin. Not just a frown or a shake of the finger; not just a snarl or a tongue-lashing; not even just a whooping or a whipping. But God damned sin in Jesus.

What does the hymn say? “If you think of sin but lightly...” look to the cross and see what God thinks of sin. But that’s not all the cross shows us, is it? Look to the cross and see what God thinks of you. God didn’t condemn sin in you; he didn’t condemn sin in me; he hasn’t nailed us to the cross. Instead, he condemned our sin in Jesus, nailing him on the cross. That’s how much God loves you. But that’s not all! God didn’t leave Jesus; he hasn’t left you. Instead, he raised Jesus back to life, to life with God; and in baptism, the Holy Spirit has connected you to Jesus for life with God.

Why did Jesus die for us?

- *What answers come first to mind?*
- *What answers might sometimes get forgotten?*

Now, with Jesus, instead of God seeing you as sinner, instead of God judging you as sinner, God sees you forgiven and right with Jesus! Oh, wouldn’t it be awful, frustrating, disappointing, if all we could do with that, if all we could do with God’s love and forgiveness is turn away, run away, and go back to our sin? Jesus didn’t die to leave us dead in our sin. God didn’t condemn sin in Jesus to leave sin ruling in us. No, with sin condemned in Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, has set us free from the rule of sin and death to live the life God has for us. Set free from the rule of sin and death, God sees you alive with his Spirit to do right. He sees his holy work worked in you and by you. He sees his righteousness and justice worked in you and by you. And as he watches you, even as you might stumble and struggle, he’s not muttering: “Why can’t they? Why won’t they? Why can’t they just stay in the lines? Why don’t they just jump in and do what I say?” No, with Jesus and his Spirit, he sees you with a heart that says: **“Well done, good and faithful servant!”**

“There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.”

“Well done, good and faithful servant!”

How do those truths help you “stay in the lines”?

How do they help you “jump in and do” what God has for you to do?

“There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” “Well done, good and faithful servant!” Who is that true for? Our first response might be: “It’s true for those who believe!” Yes, that is so true. And that is so Romans 3-5. Back in Romans 3-5, Paul laid out the Gospel promise that we are right by God through faith in Jesus. Not by our trying, not by our crying, not by our good, but we are right with God through faith in Jesus because of what Jesus has done. Now, in Romans 6-8, Paul is showing us what comes next. What comes next isn’t hooking up with the world. What comes next isn’t living the life of the world. What comes next isn’t using forgiveness as a free pass. What comes next is living in Jesus Christ, living life by the Holy Spirit.

How would you describe living life “according to the Spirit”?

When Paul says: “**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus**” he isn’t giving us a free pass to live the life of our sinful nature; he isn’t giving us a free pass to live the life of the world. No, Paul is setting us free to live life by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, when Paul says “**there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus**” is for you “**who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit,**” Paul isn’t looking to condition or limit this promise. No, Paul is just reminding us who we are. We aren’t people who use forgiveness as a free pass or license to sin. We aren’t people who live letting our sinful nature control us. We aren’t people who live the life of the world. No, we are people who live life by the Spirit of God. The life of the Spirit - love, joy peace - is the life we set out to live. The life of the Spirit - godly, pure, holy - is the life we set out to live. The life of the Spirit - connected to Jesus and the Father - that’s the life we set out to live. Are we going to get it all together in this life? No, but “**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**” That’s no free pass to live the life of the world. But it is a free pass to life with God. And that’s far, far better. Amen.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church

A Family Connecting in Christ



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Masked

With the renewed mask mandate across Illinois, we now offer masked worship - Saturdays at 5 and Sundays at 9. If you have questions, please ask!

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church.

We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

We love to have children with us in worship.

- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we like the Free Pass. Whether it's a Free Pass for a month of free coffee or bagels, or the Free Pass that people imagine in "Be True to Yourself," people love a Free Pass.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we reject the Free Pass that the world imagines, and take hold of the Lord's Free Pass - a Free Pass to live right with him - forgiven and living right by His Spirit!

OPENING HYMN

"I Lay My Sins on Jesus"
Hymn 372

I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us From the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus To wash my crimson stains
White in his blood most precious Till not a spot remains.

I lay my wants on Jesus; All fullness dwells in him.
He heals all my diseases; My soul he does redeem.
I lay my griefs on Jesus, My burdens and my cares;
He from them all releases; He all my sorrows shares.

I rest my soul on Jesus, This weary soul of mine.
His right hand me embraces; I in his arms recline.
I love the name of Jesus, Immanuel, Christ, the Lord;
Like fragrance on the breezes His name abroad is poured.

I long to be like Jesus: Meek, loving, lowly, mild;
I long to be like Jesus, The Father's holy child.
I long to be with Jesus Amid the heav'nly throng
To sing with saints his praises, To learn the angels' song.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, you reveal your mighty power chiefly in showing mercy and kindness. Grant us the full measure of your grace that we may obtain your promises and become partakers of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 8:1-4 (EHV)

So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Indeed, what the law was unable to do, because it was weakened by the flesh, God did, when he sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to deal with sin. God condemned sin in his flesh, so that the righteous decree of the law would be fully satisfied in us who are not walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia! "There is now no condemnation for those
who are in Christ Jesus!" Alleluia!
(Romans 8:1)

GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN

"Love Divine, All Love Excelling"
Hymn 365

Love divine, all love excelling, Joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
Fix in us your humble dwelling, All your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion, Boundless mercy from above.
Visit us with benediction; Comfort us with heav'nly love.

Take away our love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.
We would ever seek your blessing, Serve you as your hosts above,
Pray and praise you without ceasing, Glory in your perfect love.

Sanctify your new creation; Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us trust your great salvation, Won for us on Calvary,
Till we lay our crowns before you, Till in heav'n we take our place,
Till in glory we adore you, Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

SERMON

Romans 8

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

"Amazing Grace - How Sweet the Sound"

Hymn 379

Amazing grace -- how sweet the sound-- That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.

The Lord has promised good to me; His Word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun.

OFFERING

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